Military Writing

THE RULES

Military Writing

Goal—The Standard

1–44. Standards for Army writing

a. Effective Army writing transmits a clear message in a single, rapid reading and is generally free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage.

b. Good Army writing is concise, organized, and right to the point. Two essential requirements include putting the main point at the beginning of the correspondence and using the active voice (for example (*main point up front*), “You are entitled to jump pay for the time you spent in training last year”).

c. The standard English sentence order, subject-verb-object, works best. It speeds
communication and helps the reader understand the main point.

Army Regulation 25–50
Preparing and Managing Correspondence
Effective 15 June 2002

Military Writing

Goal—The Standard

1–4. Defining the standard

a. According to AR 600–70, the standard for Army writing is writing you can understand in a single rapid reading, and is generally free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage.

b. Good Army writing is clear, concise, organized, and right to the point.

Department of the Army Pamphlet 600–67
Effective Writing for Army Leaders
02 June 1986

Military Writing

1–45. Constructing military correspondence

a. General techniques. Focus first on the main point to construct basic military correspondence. Use of the active voice is the basic style of Army writing.

b. Specific techniques. Meeting the standards for correspondence requires specific techniques. Use these additional rules of correspondence construction to improve effectiveness.

THE RULES

(1) Use short words. Try not to use more than 15 percent over two syllables long.

(2) Keep sentences short. The average length of a sentence should be about 15 words.

(3) Write paragraphs that, with few exceptions, are no more than 10 lines.

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Military Writing

(4) Avoid jargon.

(5) Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

(6) Use I, you, and we as subjects of sentences instead of this , this head
this command, all individuals, and so forth.

THE RULES

(7) Write one-page letters and memorandums for most correspondence.
for additional information.

(8) Avoid sentences that begin with “It is …,” “There is …,”or “There are

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Military Writing

- Let your readers know right away what's important and why
- Don't beat around the bush
- Inform the reader of the key points in the first or second paragraph
- Create a clear, descriptive title, written as a noun phrase
- Describe your purpose in writing
- In a formal statement of purpose, announce your reason for writing (if it's not already clear from the title
- Put your Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) at the beginning of your paper
- Position "key" information at the beginning for a quick understanding
- If no single "key" idea stands out, create one so your paper doesn't wander aimlessly

SUBJECT: After-Action Report on the M16 Range (12 Jul 89)

MAIN POINT

I observed these strengths and weaknesses in your program.

Military Writing

- Create mostly active sentences
- Put the doer of the action in the front of the sentence
- Avoid writing in the passive voice
- If the receiver of the action is in the front of the sentence, the sentence will be passive
- Passive sentences occur in all tenses
- Spot passive sentences by analyzing the verb “to be”
- Put the doer up front
- Active sentences may have “to be” as auxiliary
- Change verb to make sentence active

Doer→Action→Receiver

Active Voice:
SGT Jones submitted the report.

ACTIVE VOICE

Passive Voice:
The report was submitted by SGT Jones.

Receiver→Action→Doer

Military Writing

- Limit long words to 15 percent of your total
- Avoid jargon, clichés, double talk, and legalese
- Use personal pronouns when acceptable or appropriate (e.g., in a letter)
- Use precise, concrete words rather than abstractions
- Try conversational tone (caution: remember appropriateness)

Three or more syllables

Long	Better
initiate	start
terminate	end
promulgate	issue
installation	post

USE SHORT WORDS

win-win
impact the
force

Weak: The applicant's signature is required.
Better: Please sign in block 2.

Military Writing

- Between 12 and 20 words
- Strive for average of 15 words (say aloud in one breath)
- Shorten needlessly wordy expressions
- Avoid "smothered" verbs
- Avoid needless repetition
- Cut sentence "stretchers"

Wordy: Due to the fact that most writers tend to be wordy, we can probably cut approximately 30 percent of the words in a first draft without really affecting the meaning to any serious extent.
Better: Because we tend to be wordy, cut 30 percent of your first draft. It probably won't affect the meaning.

KEEP SENTENCES SHORT

Smothered	Better
make a decision	decide
give a call to	call
conduct an inspection	inspect

Repetitious	Better
His duties and responsibilities	His duties
Please review and comment	Please comment
The importance and significance of	The significance of

Military Writing

- Keep paragraphs to no more than one inch deep or six typed lines long
- Start each paragraph with a key point or a topic sentence
- Give each paragraph in a memorandum a clear header
- Use subparagraphs or lists where possible
- Maintain parallel construction

Topic sentence
Explanation or elaboration
Fact #1/2, etc.
Analysis or conclusion ("so what")

PARAGRAPH LENGTH

Keep items in a series or list grammatically balanced

If you have a "1", you must also have a "2"

Military Writing

- Errors cause confusion
- Errors distract the reader
- Use standard written English
- Consult the dictionary
- Be thorough, factual, and logical
- The paper should be complete

CORRECT SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND PUNCTUATION

Military Writing

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\\Ngb-66c05-fs03\groups\ARZ\ARZ-DS\File category 351 Schools\1460 IS Effective Army Writing

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\\Ngb-66c05-fs03\groups\ARZ\ARZ-DS\File category 351 Schools\CGSC Writing Guide

\\Ngb-66c05-fs03\groups\ARZ\ARZ-DS\File category 351 Schools\Military Writing Reference Book

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Military Writing

FREE INTERNET SOURCES:

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http://www.bartleby.com/61/

http://www.bartleby.com/thesauri/

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